THE GOSPEL MESSAGE.

THE
GOSPEL MESSAGE:

BEING THE SUBSTANCE

OF

A SERMON,

DELIVERED

In the Pariſh-Church of *KINGSTON*,

NEAR *TAUNTON*,

JUNE 20, 1773.

BY THE

Rev. ROWLAND HILL, *A. M.*

TAUNTON:

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FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE POOR OF KINGSTON.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE

Rev. *James Brown.*

Reverend and dear Sir,

WHen this Sermon was delivered from the pulpit, you know, I had not the leaſt thought of ſending it to the preſs; but, as it was my firſt meſſage to your people, upon my coming to be your aſſiſtant, you wiſh me to publiſh it. Entirely upon your requeſt, it now therefore makes its appearance: which I the more readily comply with, that it may ſtand as a proof of my affection and regard towards you, as a brother beloved in the goſpel of our God.

That moſt tender and unfeigned love you bear towards the people committed to your charge, I know, is the principal reaſon which influences

you to perſuade me to publiſh it: and though they cannot be ignorant of the ſincere longings of your heart for their good, yet are you deſirous for them to have this additional teſtimony of your regard for their ſouls, that they and others may know the ſubſtance of thoſe important truths you ſo earneſtly inculcate yourſelf, or would wiſh to be inculcated by any that may be your aſſiſtant in your labours of love.

That the beſt of bleſſings may be the continual portion of you and yours, and that you may go on and proſper moſt abundantly in your miniſtry, is the earneſt prayer of

Your ſincerely affectionate brother,

in the fellowſhip of the goſpel,

ROWLAND HILL.

Kingſton, July 16, 1773.

To the PARISHIONERS of

Kingston and *Cothelſtone.*

My dear friends,

GRace, *mercy, and peace be with you, from God our father and from the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Since it has been the good pleaſure of our God to caſt my lot for a time amongſt you, permit me to dedicate this, the firſt fruits of my labours, as your meſſenger in the goſpel, to your uſe and ſervice. As this Sermon was delivered* extempore, *without any intention of its being afterwards printed, much more than the* ſubſtance *of it I have not been able to recollect: however, as I hope never to be aſhamed of* plain familiar ſpeaking, *or rather* converſation, *from the pulpit*; *the* extempore *ſtyle have I endeavoured to keep up. The truths contained in it, I am well perſuaded, are of the moſt awful and important nature*; *ſuffer me therefore, my deareſt friends, to wiſh that all the power of them may ſink, with the deepeſt ſolemnity, into all your hearts. The proſperity of your ſouls, I can ſafely proteſt, is all that I deſire. God is my witneſs,*

neſs how frequently you are the ſubject of my private ſupplications before the throne of grace! and how I ſhould account your real enjoyment of the bleſſings of the goſpel, greater riches than the treaſures of the eaſt! remember that you have now a Miniſter, ſettled among you, whoſe whole ſoul pants for your proſperity; for you muſt be convinced, both by his earneſt preaching, and exemplary converſation, that the glory of God, in the ſalvation of your ſouls, is all his aim. O how will it grieve him were his faithful admonitions, and tender warnings, to be loſt upon you! If therefore you have any deſires to advance the happineſs of your miniſters, if any longings for the good and ſalvation of your own ſouls, if there be any conſolation in Chriſt, if any comfort of love, if any fellowſhip of the ſpirit, if any bowels, and mercies, *conjointly do we intreat you to think on theſe things; and may the God of peace be with you, ſo prays*

Your moſt affectionate,
and willing ſervant,
in the goſpel,
ROWLAND HILL.

1 CORINTH. II. 1, 2.

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of ſpeech, or of wiſdom, declaring unto you the teſtimony of GOD;
For I determined not to know any thing among you, ſave JESUS CHRIST, *and him crucified.*

HOW awful is the conſideration, that every ſoul, which is born into the world, is *born for an eternity!* An eternity, that will prove, to every individual, either a ſtate of the completeſt happineſs, or of the moſt excruciating torture, and deepeſt deſpair. — My dear friends, I pray you to conſider. — There is not a ſingle ſoul among you, to whom this moſt important truth does not *perſonally* belong. — A little while, and *all will be over.* — O that you may think of it! — If you are *loſt once*, you are *loſt for ever.*

BUT, if theſe moſt weighty thoughts are of ſuch vaſt concern to my dear hearers in general, with how much greater

ſolemnity ſhould they over-awe the mind of the ſpeaker in particular; who, as GOD's meſſenger, upon his moſt ſacred errand, is entruſted with the care of ſuch precious and immortal ſouls! — O! did but miniſters duly conſider the exceeding awfulneſs of their call, with what holy trembling, and earneſt ſupplication before GOD, would they take upon them the important taſk! How would they ſhudder, at the thoughts of the people's periſhing, through their negligence and inattention! How would they pant to be made the happy inſtruments of bringing them to the kingdom of immortal joy!

LET me therefore preach this moſt ſolemn ſubject cloſely to myſelf. — Through the wiſe providence of our GOD, in conjunction with him, who is more immediately your paſtor, am I appointed as your aſſiſtant labourer in the goſpel. — The charge and care of your ſouls therefore reſt upon us. Having GOD's commiſſion, we are commanded as from the LORD himſelf, that with all diligence we ſhould *preach the word*; that we ſhould *be inſtant in ſeaſon, and out of ſeaſon*; that we ſhould *reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-ſuffering and doctrine.* * Thus, by *fighting the good fight of faith*, are we to ſhew ourſelves *approved unto* GOD, *faithful workmen, that need not be aſhamed.* † If you ſhould periſh through our negligence,

* 2 *Tim.* iv. 2. † 2 *Tim.* ii. 15.

negligence, the condemnation will be ours. But if, after all our warnings, and earneſt ſtrivings for your good, you ſhould continue ignorant and unbelieving; what a complicated deſtruction, what vengeance and woe, for your obſtinacy and rebellion, will you meet with from the LORD! Indeed, my dear hearers, I tremble for myſelf; I tremble for you all. — Time is ſhort; eternity is at hand. — Matters of the moſt laſting importance are before us. — Remember, therefore, 'tis now yours to hear, and mine to preach, with all that attention, which the ſolemnity of the ſubject ſo juſtly demands.

IN order, therefore, that theſe great ends may be anſwered, let us firſt conſider, what may be the beſt method of treating a ſubject, upon which ſo much depends. And herein may we not ſay, Bleſſed be GOD, for a bible to direct us? The words of our text plainly prove, that *plain preaching* is the *beſt preaching*. But, that we may ſee this the more clearly, let us examine our apoſtle, a little at large, in what he advances upon this head: And how evidently does it appear, upon this ſubject, that *pride was not made for man!* This accurſed root of bitterneſs ſeemed to be the ſin, that ſpoiled all the glory of the *Corinthian* church; whoſe profeſſors, proud of their own ſpiritual gifts, and outward acquirements, were led to look with contempt upon the unaffected ſimplicity of the goſpel. The doctrines of the CROSS, and of

a CRUCIFIED REDEEMER, were ſubjects too mortifying to the pride of their lofty hearts; which wanted nicer doctrines, nicely decorated with all the ſmooth and pleaſing *varniſh* of eloquence and art.

IN oppoſition to this evil, does our apoſtle make a noble ſtand, eſpecially in the chapter preceding our text; wherein, notwithſtanding all their pride and calumnies againſt him, for his homely * ſtyle, he tells them plainly, that, however they may

* Though I hate criticizing in a ſermon, yet a little in a note, upon this ſubject, may not be amiſs. — I thought myſelf at liberty to make uſe of the term *homely*, from an accuſation brought againſt the apoſtle, by theſe ſame ſelf-conceited *Corinthians*. This he mentions in his ſecond epiſtle, *ch.* ix. *v.* 6. *But though I be rude in ſpeech*, EI DE KAI IDIOTES TO LOGO, *yet not in underſtanding*. Now the moſt proper meaning of IDIOTES is *homely* or *ruſtic*, or what the *Latins* would call *plebeius*. When applied to *ſentiment* or *expreſſion*, as above, it means *plain* and *ordinary*, ſuch as *ignorant ruſtics* would uſe, without the leaſt *literary cultivation*. Our *Engliſh* word *ideot*, which is taken from this expreſſion, and which we uſe for *a perſon deprived of underſtanding*, will give us much leſs aſſiſtance, in the explanation of this word, than a parallel paſſage in the *Acts*, *ch.* IV. *v.* 13. *Peter* and *John*, being nothing better than *fiſhermen*, were doubtleſs of this *ruſtic* or *uncultivated* caſt; and, when they were examined before the *Sanhedrim*, for preaching CHRIST, we are told, that the *Jewiſh* rulers perceived, that they were *ignorant and unlearned men*; ANTHROPOI AGRAMMATOI EISI, KAI IDIOTAI. Rather, therefore, ſhould the firſt word have been tranſlated *unlearned*, and the ſecond *homely*

may admire *the words, which man's wiſdom teacheth*, ‡ in preaching the goſpel; yet the ſuperior wiſdom of GOD had taught him *utterly to deſpiſe it:* And, quite contrary to their notions of the matter, he had his commands to preach, NOT *with wiſdom of words, leſt the croſs of* CHRIST *ſhould be made of none*

ly or *uncultivated.* In order to ſtrengthen the above-cited paſſage, let us conſider a ſimilar accuſation brought againſt our apoſtle, in the ſame epiſtle, *ch.* x. *v.* 10. *His letters, ſay they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily preſence is weak, and his ſpeech contemptible*, or *good-for-nothing*; O LOGOS EXOUTHENEMENOS. Now I know, that moſt commentators, prepoſſeſſed of a notion, that *Paul* preached as learnedly as he wrote, are very fond of interpreting this paſſage, as ſuppoſing him to have had a *ſhrill* or *ſtammering* accent. But how can this *forced* interpretation be admitted as juſt, when conſidered with the word IDIOTES cited as above, and the whole tenor of the two firſt chapters of theſe epiſtles? And though it is certain *Paul*'s accuſers went far beyond the truth, in ſuppoſing him either *vulgar* or *contemptible*, in his preaching; yet, from theſe very accuſations, and his own expreſs words, the truth of the obſervation, that he was a *plain, familiar* ſpeaker, is as obvious as the day. — What a pity it is, therefore, that many of our miniſters ſuffer their people to be lulled to ſleep, with nothing better than *dry morality*, or ſuch *learned orations* as they cannot underſtand? Had they but hearts duly impreſſed with the worth of ſouls, would they not eſteem it their higheſt honour, to ſpeak the *plaineſt truths*, in the moſt *ſimple way*, that their congregations might underſtand them? While *learned preaching*, and *moral preaching* independent of Chriſtian principles, is ſtill to be in vogue, what are we to expect, but that *ignorance* and *immorality* ſhould continue, as they have done, dreadfully to abound?

‡ 1 *Cor.* i. 17, &c.

none effect. For however the *plain* preaching of the croſs might be eſteemed as *fooliſhneſs to them that periſh*; yet ſtill could he glory in it, as it proves to others, *to them that are ſaved, the power of* GOD. And this he aſſerts, as from the direct teſtimony of ſcripture, as in *Iſaiah* xxix. 14. wherein it is written, *I will deſtroy the wiſdom of the wiſe, and bring to nothing the underſtanding of the prudent.* He therefore gives the challenge, and aſks the following queſtions: *Where is the wiſe? Where is the ſcribe? Where is the diſputer of this world? Hath not* GOD *made fooliſh the wiſdom of this world?* After, therefore, having as it were proved the point, by aſking theſe queſtions, he proceeds to ſhew, that, *as the world by wiſdom knew not* GOD, *ſo it pleaſed him, by the* fooliſhneſs of preaching, *to ſave them that believe.* Not at all, therefore, affected at the conſequences that may enſue, however *the unbelieving* Jews *are for requiring a ſign, and the proud* Greeks *are for ſeeking after wiſdom*; yet ſtill he determines, in oppoſition to both, *to preach* CHRIST *crucified, though a ſtumbling-block to the* Jews, *and fooliſhneſs to the* Greeks.

AFTER having thus at large reaſoned upon the point, he then proceeds to finiſh his argument, by an obſervation from a plain and convincing matter of fact. *For you ſee your calling, brethren, how that not many wiſe men after the fleſh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But* GOD *hath choſen the*

the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and GOD *hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath* GOD *chosen, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are:* And all this for the best of reasons; *that no flesh should glory in his sight.* Having thus concluded his debate upon the subject, we are next brought to the beginning of the beautiful determination, which he deduces from it, in regard to the practice of it for himself; in which, he, utterly despising all proud objections, makes a full confession of the simplicity of his errand, in the words of our text. *And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of* GOD; *for I determined not to know any thing among you, save* JESUS CHRIST, *and him crucified.* Nor is he ashamed further to record the diffident fears he had, as to himself, and the opinion he entertained of the poverty of his administrations, when he continues to add; *And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.* Still disclaiming the proud work of human oratory, he reminds them, that *his speech, and his preaching was* NOT *with the enticing words of man's wisdom; but in demonstration of the spirit, and of power:* And the most excellent reason he gives for it is, *that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of* GOD.

AND now, let my dear hearers conſider the ſubſtance of what has been ſaid: Then ſhall you judge, each for yourſelves, if we have not here the *beſt authority*, for the *plaineſt* and moſt *familiar* method of ſpeaking, that can be conceived. What have we to do, but to ſtudy how we may preach, ſo as beſt to be underſtood, even by the meaneſt capacity? Suffer me therefore, out of the moſt tender love for your ſouls ſalvation, inſtead of mocking you with hard and unuſual words, and learned orations, that many of you cannot underſtand, to reaſon with you in the moſt *eaſy* and *familiar* ſtyle, or rather to *talk* to you quite in your own way, while delivering among you the important truths of GOD. The proud may ridicule; and they are heartily welcome. While I have GOD's authority, for the method I adopt, *man*'s oppoſition will be but little regarded. I can proteſt before the LORD, that your ſalvation is all I have in view. — GOD ſnatch you from your ſins, and bleſs you with the knowledge and ſalvation of his CHRIST! — If this bleſſed end be but granted, with *Paul* will I declare, that herein *I do rejoice, yea and will rejoice.*

BESIDES, my dear friends, as I do it in meekneſs and love, you muſt permit me to tell you, that, as I have for ſome time accuſtomed myſelf to preach and converſe among people of little education, I am far from being ignorant of

the capacities of the generality; how difficult it is, even in common matters, that they are not entirely converſant with, to make them underſtand. And, if we further conſider the general prevailing ignorance among the poor, concerning even the firſt and plaineſt principles of chriſtianity; together with the natural blindneſs and ſtupidity of the human heart; the great neceſſity of repeatedly bringing *line upon line, and precept upon precept*, in the moſt familiar terms, I think, cannot be denied.

HAVING dwelt thus far upon the firſt clauſe of our text, you may now ſee, why I am determined to abide by *Paul*'s reſolution of caſting away all *excellency of ſpeech, and wiſdom of words*; that I may be the more uſeful among you: And I muſt inſiſt upon it, that you bear with me, in my ſimplicity; for *the love of* CHRIST *conſtrains me.*

TWO things are principally hinted at, in our text: — The reſolution *Paul* had determined to make uſe of, in treating his ſubject; — and the ſubject matter itſelf. Having done with the former, we now come to the latter; *I am determined not to know any thing among you, ſave* JESUS CHRIST, *and him crucified.* How fully do theſe words contain the ſubſtance of the whole plan of the goſpel ſalvation? Man by ſin is totally deſtroyed, — caſt out of the favour of GOD, — under

his tremendous curſe, — utterly undone, — without the leaſt power of bringing ſalvation to his own heart; when a crucified redeemer comes down from heaven, ſteps in to ſave, by introducing a complete and everlaſting righteouſneſs, for the recovery of every ſinner, that is enabled through grace to accept it. — What a delightful meſſage is this! What a meſſage of mercy and of love, to a ſet of rebels apoſtatized from GOD, and in direct rebellion againſt him! — Surely you will attend to it, while I enter into a more immediate conſideration of our total ruin by nature, and afterwards explain to you the glorious and complete recovery provided for us, in the blood and righteouſneſs of the ſon of GOD.

WHEN our firſt parents were ſent forth from the hands of their creator, their hearts being the direct tranſcript of his moral image, they appeared the completeſt workmanſhip of an holy GOD; were bleſſed with a nature ſpotleſs and pure, as an angel could poſſeſs. All love, all peace, all joy, all delight in, and conformity to, the will of GOD that made them, were the continual inmates of their happy breaſts. Not the leaſt taint of the minuteſt impurity had they, to diſturb their peace; but all was heaven, and conſolation in the LORD. GOD pronounced this, his laſt work, to be *very good*; § and, as

§ *Gen.* i. 31.

as ſuch, took delight in the creature, that he had made. — Such was man, while bleſſed with innocence before the fall; but how dreadful were the conſequences of the firſt tranſgreſſion! How was GOD's workmanſhip robbed of all its holineſs, and grandeur, thereby! How was the once glorious temple of the HOLY GHOST proſtituted to iniquity, and converted into the moſt hateful den of filthy luſts, and vile abominations! Which of you can deny this, who either reads his bible, or reads himſelf? From *Geneſis* to the *Revelations*, all ſcripture declares this awful truth, that, as ſoon as ever man fell, immediately was he deprived of every thing that was good, and dreadfully filled with every thing that was bad.

AND, as the ſalvation, procured by a crucified Redeemer, can never be regarded by any, but thoſe, who have firſt been convinced, that they are *loſt* without it; the fall muſt be preached, as an introduction to the Goſpel. And, in this moſt neceſſary part of my ſubject, I muſt inſiſt upon *uſing great plainneſs of ſpeech*; not meaning thereby to offend you, but, as ſeeing your danger, I am conſtrained by love, to beſeech you to beware. No tender-hearted ſurgeon can ever bear the thoughts of ſuffering that patient, whom he loves, to die, for want of the deepeſt probing, or the moſt painful operations, if neceſſary for his recovery; nor will he ever think

of ſkinning over a wound, which he knows is corrupted at the bottom, leſt it ſhould again break forth, and terminate in death. So, with the ſofteſt hand of tenderneſs and love, I would pray you, to permit me to prove guilt upon your conſciences, that you may ſee your danger, and be convinced of the neceſſity of ſeeking for a recovery.

YOUR fallen condition, therefore, by nature, and by practice, muſt firſt be inſiſted on. This we will prove,

1*ſt*, By expreſs teſtimony of ſcripture;

2*dly*, By your own experience; and,

3*dly*, Will we conſider the curſe pronounced againſt ſinners, ſo long as they continue without an intereſt in CHRIST.

FIRST, then, we are to examine ſcripture, upon this head. — To quote every paſſage, that might be brought upon this occaſion, would be endleſs; a few, therefore, of the moſt ſtriking paſſages alone ſhall be conſidered. — Now, as GOD knows his own creature beſt, that character, which he draws of man, muſt be a juſt one. — No ſooner do we hear of the fall, and the curſe pronounced conſequent there-

upon

upon, in the 3d of *Geneſis*, but, in the 4th chapter, we ſee the dreadful effects, that immediately enſued; in which we find the firſt of the offspring of fallen man proves a *murderer*; a *murderer* of the baſeſt ſort, that can be conceived; a *murderer* of his *own*, and of his then *only brother*; and that too, for a reaſon as completely helliſh, as the action itſelf: *And wherefore ſlew he him? Becauſe his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* ‖ — Such were the beginnings of the wickedneſs of fallen man. Let us ſee if the apoſtate race amend, in their generation. — On account of the length of life, at firſt granted to mankind, their numbers preſently were prodigiously increaſed. — Are they the better for the increaſe? — Juſt the very contrary. — As they increaſed in numbers, ſo they increaſed in wickedneſs, 'till at length they became ſo totally corrupted, as to be guilty of every thing, that can be conceived, hateful and deteſtable to GOD. — Who can read the dreadful account given by the LORD himſelf, without wonder and aſtoniſhment? *And* GOD *ſaw, that the wickedneſs of man was great, upon the earth; and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil*, and that too *continually:* * Inſomuch that we are told, that *it repented the* LORD, *that he had made man; yea, that it even grieved him, at his heart.* — What words are theſe! — GOD perfectly

‖ 1 *John*, iii. 12. * *Gen.* vi. 5.

ly *nauſeates*, as it were, the creature of his own making! — HE REPENTS OF IT! — IT GRIEVES HIM AT HIS HEART! — O then conſider, what amazing ſtrength of expreſſion is here made uſe of, to ſet forth the character of man, that monſter of apoſtacy, and rebellion againſt GOD! — And what is the reſult of all this wickedneſs? — O! when the LORD is once determined to *eaſe him of his adverſaries*, § how will he prove the greatneſs of his vengeance, by *daſhing them to pieces, like potters veſſels*, while there is none to help! — Mercy, at length, ſeems totally exhauſted. It is now the time, therefore, for juſtice to interfere; and the flood is to be brought in, upon *the world of the ungodly*. This we ſee, *Gen* vi. 7. *And the* LORD *ſaid*; *I will deſtroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth*; *both man and beaſt, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air*; *for it repenteth me, that I have made them.* So that all creation, being made for the uſe of man, became accurſed for his ſin. — But were all to periſh, in this immenſe deſtruction? — O! how awful is the thought! — Only one man is found *a preacher of righteouſneſs*, among all the inhabitants of the earth! — and that too, at a time, when the numbers of its inhabitants, on account of the then longevity of mankind, by ſome have been ſuppoſed by no means inferior to the vaſt multitudes of the preſent

§ *Iſaiah* i. 24.

preſent day! — And ſtill none but *Noah*, and his ſmall family, conſiſting only of eight ſouls, were ſaved in the ark, provided for that purpoſe; while thouſands upon thouſands were *ſwept away with the beſom of deſtruction*, ‡ from the preſence of the LORD! — Such was the dreadful condition of man, before the flood! And who then can conſider, with any degree of attention, this tranſient view of the old world, and afterwards deny the degeneracy of human nature, and vainly boaſt of its power to obey? † But what was the conſequence of

‡ *Iſaiah* xiv. 23.

† It may not be amiſs to add, in a note, what I thought beſt to omit, in the ſermon. — The *dignity of human nature*, and *man's propenſity to good*, is the general topic of many of the *polite* preachers of the preſent day. The offenſive ſubjects of our *complete fall in* Adam, and of our *recovery only by* CHRIST, can never be grateful to their *refined* taſtes. I therefore think it my duty, as a miniſter of the church of *England*, to warn all thoſe, who love their ſouls, or love the truth, to *beware* of ſuch *heatheniſh divinity*. And from the cenſures of ſuch divines themſelves, do we appeal to *thoſe very doctrines they themſelves have been compelled to ſubſcribe*, in vindication of what we aſſert. And I would, moreover, earneſtly requeſt every member of our excellent eſtabliſhment, to bring all they hear, within the pale of the church, to the teſt of the articles and homilies, ſet forth by authority. The ignorance of the generality, concerning the articles and homilies, is really lamentable; eſpecially in a day, in which ſuch formidable efforts are continually making, by many, even of the clergy

of the flood? Did it, in any meaſure, tend towards an improvement of mankind? Surely one would have thought, that if love did not conſtrain them, yet ſuch inſtances of juſtice would, for the future, have over-awed them. But, O! how does the continuation of the hiſtory of man, as recorded in ſcripture, ſtill convince us of the incorrigible corruption, and depravity of his heart! No ſooner did man a ſecond time increaſe, but the ſame polluted nature, not the leaſt cleanſed by all the waters of the flood, began directly to break over all bounds, and to ſend forth its filthy ſtreams, as before. All religion ſeemed again almoſt totally baniſhed, from off the face of the earth, when immediate judgments were again ſent from above, in vindication of the juſtice of GOD: Thoſe filthy dreamers of *Sodom*, *Gomorrah*, *Admah*, and *Zeboim*, that defiled the fleſh, were *ſet forth for an example, ſuffering the vengeance of eternal fire.* ‖ *Abraham* and his little family are the only perſons mentioned, as fearing GOD, and his offspring afterwards were taken into a more immediate covenant with him; by which means, they enjoyed all the privileges of his choiceſt bleſſings, as their continual portion. But ſtill, to read their hiſtory alſo, what was their conduct but

gy themſelves, for their excluſion from among us, as the ſtandard doctrines of the church.

‖ *Jude*, 7.

but the baſeſt rebellion and ingratitude, for the mercies they had received? — But why need we dwell upon hiſtory alone, to prove this point, when the expreſs words of ſcripture are ſo plain to our purpoſe? The LORD, it is confeſſed, made man upright, at the firſt; but he hath *ſought out, for himſelf, many inventions:* * Therefore is it declared, that *all fleſh hath corrupted his way, upon earth.* § And when the LORD is repreſented as *looking down from heaven, upon the children of men, to ſee if there were any that did underſtand, and ſeek after* GOD; † we are told, upon the review, that *there is none righteous; no, not one. There is none that underſtandeth; there is none that ſeeketh after* GOD. *They are* ALL *gone out of the way; they are altogether become unprofitable; there is none that doth good; no, not one. Their throat is an open ſepulchre; with their tongues have they uſed deceit; the poiſon of aſps is under their lips. Whoſe mouth is full of curſing and bitterneſs: Their feet are ſwift to ſhed blood: Deſtruction and miſery are in their way: And the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of* GOD *before their eyes.* ‖ Well, therefore, might the LORD expreſs himſelf, as if aſtoniſhed at man's wickedneſs, when *he looked, and there was none to help; yea, even wondered that there was none to uphold.* ‡ The ſame truth we find con-

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* *Eccl.* vii. 29. § *Gen.* vi. 12. † *Pſalm* xiv. 2. ‖ *Rom.* iii. 10,—19. ‡ *Iſaiah* lxiii. 5.

feſſed by *David*, when he cries, *Behold, I was ſhapen in iniquity, and in ſin did my mother conceive me.* ‡ How ſtrong are the words of *Job* alſo, upon this ſubject, when he aſks the queſtion, and reſolves it: *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.* * So *Eliphaz*; *What is man, that he ſhould be clean? Or he that is born of a woman, that he ſhould be righteous?* † And how does *Job* confeſs, in regard to himſelf; *Behold, I am vile!* § And how does he proceed, in deep humiliation; *Wherefore I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes!* ǂ Surely then we have ſufficient proof, to confeſs, with *Jeremiah*, that *the heart is deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked*; ‖ and to conclude, with *Paul*, *all to be under ſin, that every mouth may be ſtopt, and all the world become guilty before* GOD. ††

THUS, from ſcripture, have we been endeavouring to prove the truth of the fall of man, in *general:* Suffer me now, ſecondly, to evidence this to be your caſe, in *particular.* — When *Nathan* came, with his reproof, to *David*, he directly ſays to him, *Thou art the man.* ** In the ſame direct manner, am I now to charge ſin upon your conſciences; and in order to this, let us examine you, as to the different faculties

‡ *Pſalm* li. 5. * *Job* xiv. 4. † xv. 14. § xl. 4. ǂ xlii. 6. ‖ *Jer.* xvii. 9. †† *Rom.* iii. 9, & 19. ** 2 *Sam.* xii. 7.

culties of the ſoul: And firſt as to the underſtanding. Is it, as it ſhould be, filled with *the light of the knowledge of* GOD, *in the face of* JESUS CHRIST? † Or is it not rather dreadfully *darkened, through the ignorance that is in you?* * O! how are poor deluded mortals, that have not a moment that they can call their own, ſeeking to improve themſelves in all knowledge, except heavenly knowledge! How are they ſet upon being wiſe for the body, while the dear immortal ſoul is totally diſregarded! Aſk people, concerning temporal matters, and they have anſwers in abundance. Talk to them about the low concerns of eating and drinking, buying and ſelling, *&c.* and they will talk to you, by the hour. But, O! if you turn the converſation, and aſk the plaineſt things concerning ſalvation, ſilence preſently enſues, and ignorance of the things, that everlaſtingly concern them, is to be pleaded as an excuſe.

AND though they are thus ignorant, not the leaſt hungerings and thirſtings, after ſpiritual knowledge, appear upon the heart. How is this proved, by every idle tale-book being preferred to the bible! And when the bible happens now and then, out of form or cuſtom, to be looked into; how is the poor blind ſinner ſatisfied, when the taſk is over, even without

† 2 *Cor.* iv. 6. * *Eph.* iv. 18.

out his being one whit the better, for the ſlaviſh drudgery he has performed! But is not the ſin of our ignorance heightened, when we conſider it not only as being natural to us, but wilful and deliberate? Is it not a truth, that *men love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil?* ‡ Can it be denied, that many are blinded, as it were, by choice? Might not the ignorant know more, if they would? But, O! theſe earthly hearts of ours, how are they ſet upon the world! *Mammon* is the god we naturally delight in. We think ourſelves happy, in caring continually for the body, while our poor ſouls are curſed with *a darkneſs, that might be felt.* †

THUS far concerning the depravity of your underſtandings: I have now other hard tidings to bring to your ears. — Are your wills better than your underſtandings? — You frequently ſay, in the LORD's prayer, *Thy will be done.* But do you mean what you ſay? Or do you pray, without meaning? — What were you created for? Why, reaſon herſelf, blinded as ſhe is, will directly tell you; to do the will of your creator? — But what is his will? Why, *this is the will of* GOD, *even your ſanctification.* § — All ſin, you muſt be convinced, is directly againſt the holy will of GOD. Sin therefore

‡ *John* iii. 19. † *Exod.* x. 21. § 1 *Theſſ.* iv. 3.

fore cannot be maintained in the heart, but the will of man muſt thereby be ſet up, in direct oppoſition to the will of GOD. GOD's command is, *My ſon give me thy heart.* * Thoſe that *dare* to diſobey ſuch juſt commands, appear as in direct and wilful rebellion, againſt the GOD that made them. Can you, therefore, in regard to *doing* GOD's will, when he *wills* you to part with all your ſins, not only thoſe, to which you are more indifferent, but even with thoſe darling idols, that may appear to you dear as a right eye, uſeful as a right hand; can you, I ſay, upon GOD's command, out of love to the Redeemer, caſt them away, as things of nought, without the leaſt reſerve? Or rather have you not, on the contrary, ſome boſom luſt, ſome favourite *Iſaac*, which you delight in too dearly to reſign, and for which you are continually pleading, *Spare it, is it not a little one?* And 'till ſuch time as you are brought to this, even to part with ALL for the LORD, remember it is your own will, not GOD's, that you are determined to abide by. — But *doing* is not all. How ſtand your wills alſo, in regard to *ſuffering* for GOD? After the example of a patient and afflicted CHRIST, can you, without murmuring and rebellion, under ſevere and cutting diſpenſations, contentedly ſay, *Father, not my will, but thine be done?* ‖ When loſſes overtake you in your circumſtances, and you are

* *Prov.* xxiii. 26. ‖ *Luke* xxii. 42.

are ſtripped of all your earthly enjoyments, can you adopt the words of *Job? The* LORD *gave, and the* LORD *taketh away: Bleſſed be the name of the* LORD. † When ſickneſs comes upon you, and ſpoils all your expectations in the bud, like *Eli* can you ſay, *It is the* LORD, *let him do what ſeemeth him good?* * When death comes, and ſnatches from your boſom your neareſt friends, and deareſt relations, can you then with meekneſs ſubmit, and own *it is well*, § with the *Shunammite* of old? — And now, my dear friends, what think you of your wills? Are you as *clay, in the hands of the potter?* ‡ Or are you not rather as ſtubborn *bullocks, unaccuſtomed to the yoke?* ‖ Examine your hearts, and it will ſurely appear, how reſolutely your wills ſtand in oppoſition to the LORD.

LET us next examine the affections and paſſions of the mind; and firſt, among theſe, love may be ſuppoſed to be the reigning principle. We will firſt then enquire, what ſhould be its object. The firſt and great command directs us, in this. *Thou ſhalt love the* LORD *thy* GOD, *with all thy heart, with all thy ſoul, and with all thy ſtrength.* ‖‖ And what will be the conſequences of this love? Thoſe, that love GOD, will

† *Job* i. 21. * 1 *Sam.* iii. 18. § 2 *Kings*, iv. 26. ‡ *Jer.* xviii. 6. ‖ xxxi. 18. ‖‖ *Deut.* vi. 5.

will love prayer, love his word, love his ordinances, love all that can be conceived under the name of holineſs, or conformity to the ſacred image of the holy GOD. But will your love bear to be brought to this ſacred teſt? Can you ſay, with *David*, LORD, *how I love thy law?* * What! can there be ſuch a monſter in contradiction, as a Chriſtian that loves pride, that loves luſt, that loves malice, that loves the world? A Chriſtian, on the contrary, that hates prayer, that hates his bible, that hates GOD's ſabbath, that hates his fellow-creatures? And yet, how many, it is to be feared, are condemned by ſuch conſiderations as theſe! O that you may be convinced, how the love of ſin is natural to you all, and how a hatred to holineſs is one of the dreadful evils, conſequent upon the fall!

THUS much concerning your love, and, its contrary paſſion, hatred. Shall I next hint a word, concerning your joy and ſorrow? — The chriſtian man can take no real joy, but joy in GOD, and in conformity to his will; and this he finds, by his happy experience, to be *joy unſpeakable, and full of glory.* † Inſtead of taking joy in ſin, it is now his pain and grief, even hateful and deteſtable to his heart. All his joys, in his former abominations, are become now his ſorrow; and all

* *Pſalm* cxix. 97. † 1 *Pet.* i. 8.

all the ſorrow he formerly felt, in the irkſome taſk of religion, which he thought himſelf compelled to perform, is now converted into the pureſt joy. He can even eſteem it *his meat and drink, to do his father's will*; ‖ and with an enlarged heart has he been taught, to run the ways of GOD's commandments. — But are theſe the ſenſations of your hearts, my friends? Or are not ſome of them juſt the very contrary, to what is above laid down? — O! to think of rejoicing or glorying in ſin, what is it, but to glory in your ſhame? — May my GOD then convince you of your ſins, and lead you to deteſt them!

NEXT let me examine you, as to your fears. — Now, *the fear of the* LORD is ſaid to be *the beginning of wiſdom.* * The real Chriſtian, therefore, through this holy fear, (though by no means of a ſlaviſh, but of a loving, filial nature,) is led to *dread* ſin, as well as *deteſt* it. He is taught to fly from it, as from the face of a ſerpent. He literally *abhors that which is evil*, and loves to *cleave to that which is good.* § — But is it not to be lamented, that many of you live totally dead to this holy temper? O! what a character! Some there are, who neither fear GOD, nor fear to offend him! Dreadfully *hardened, through the deceitfulneſs of ſin*, they daringly

‖ *John* iv. 34. * *Pſalm* cxi. 10. § *Rom.* xii. 9.

ly go on to add ſin unto ſin, though the LORD has declared, *in* the commiſſion of *one*, *they ſhall not go unpuniſhed.*

BUT why ſhould we dwell any longer upon this ſubject, when the general apoſtacy appears ſo obviouſly upon all? O! how ſin ſeems univerſally to abound! What pride, what neglect of prayer, what covetouſneſs, what diſhoneſty, what deceitfulneſs, what vile tempers of anger, malice, revenge, *&c.* what ſabbath-breaking, what profane blaſpheming the ſacred name of GOD, what filthy luſts, and beaſtly drunkenneſs, appear every where around us! And from whence all this, but from a heart that is totally corrupted, and at enmity with GOD?

AND now, thirdly, let us juſt hint the ruin and curſe due to us, on account of our ſins. — So ſoon as *Adam* fell, the curſe was pronounced; *In dying thou ſhalt die:* * And as *heaven and earth ſhall ſooner paſs away, than the leaſt jot, or tittle, from the holy law of* GOD, † the ſame truth is repeatedly confirmed. *The ſoul that ſinneth, it ſhall die.* ‡ *The wages of ſin is death.* § *Curſed is every one, that continueth not in all things written in the law, to do them.* ‖ As GOD's holy law, therefore,

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* *Gen.* ii. 17. margin of the bible. † *Matt.* v. 18. ‡ *Ezek.* xviii. 4. § *Rom.* vi. 23. ‖ *Gal.* iii. 10. — *Deut.* xxvii. 26.

therefore, never can abate the rigour of its demands, for the commiſſion of a ſingle trangreſſion, we are told, *by the deeds of the law, no fleſh living ſhall be juſtified, in* GOD's *ſight.* † Therefore it is, that the law is deſcribed, as the *letter that killeth*; § the *miniſtration of death*; ‖ and the *miniſtration of condemnation.* ‡ Such is the language of the law from *Sinai!* Whereby we ſee, that by the firſt covenant, the covenant of works, all are loſt; nor is there left the leaſt gleam of hope for fallen man, whereby he can be ſaved, by a righteouſneſs of his own. So completely is he undone, without the grace of the Redeemer! Nay, what is worſe, he even ſeems to be in love with his miſery, and bent upon his deſtruction.

SOME however, bleſſed be GOD! are convinced of their danger, and are athirſt for ſalvation; and, like *Peter* ſinking in the waters, are conſtrained to cry out, LORD, *ſave, or I periſh.* O! thanks be to GOD, for the goſpel meſſage to ſuch ſouls as theſe! Come, my dear, deſponding, broken-hearted fellow-ſinners, I have now to conclude with the beſt of news, in my addreſs to you. The crucified CHRIST is now to be ſet forth, as the balm for your hearts, as the whole of your ſalvation. — Does the law, for inſtance, *curſe* you for your ſins? Glory be to GOD, for a bleeding CHRIST! *He was*

† *Rom.* iii. 20. § 2 *Cor.* iii. 6. ‖ iii. 7. ‡ iii. 9.

was made a curſe for us, that we might be bleſſed. † — Does juſtice arreſt you, and ſternly cry, *Pay me that thou oweſt?* * Juſtice itſelf can demand no more, than what CHRIST has done for thee. As thy covenant head, has he brought in an everlaſting payment; for *he hath magnified the law, and made it honourable.* ‡ And GOD, that GOD that cannot lye, has given his promiſe, in conſideration of this ſatisfaction: *Thy ſins and iniquities will I remember no more.* § — O! how lovely is this goſpel to the convinced ſoul! *Sinai*'s thunders are now no more. The angry GOD, and ſin-avenging judge, becomes the ſinner's beſt friend, and reconciled GOD and father, in CHRIST JESUS. Such is the mercy, grace, and love, that freely flow in JESUS to the loſt! The pooreſt ſhall find the moſt hearty welcome; for his mercy is free for the vileſt of the vile.

BUT what, ſay ſome that are panting after holineſs, will a mere deliverance from the curſe and puniſhment of ſin avail, while the dominion and power of it remain in the heart? — Glory be to grace! the ſalvation of CHRIST is perfectly complete. — He therefore not only juſtifies, but ſanctifies alſo: And though the poor loſt ſinner can no more

† *Gal.* iii. 13, 14. * *Matt.* xviii. 28. ‡ *Iſaiah* xlii. 21. § *Jer.* xxxi. 34.

change his heart, than he can make a world; yet the LORD has promiſed; *A new heart will I give you.* * So that holineſs of heart appears to be the gift of GOD, through JESUS CHRIST, and freely is it given, that the poor ſinner may freely receive. *Bleſſed are they,* (ſays the LORD,) *that hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs; for they ſhall be filled.* † The poor hungering and thirſting ſoul comes for this righteouſneſs, and the LORD JESUS, in grace and love, beſtows it upon the heart. The tempers are ſweetly and univerſally changed. His pride is turned into meekneſs, his anger into love, his unbelief into faith, his covetouſneſs into liberality. In ſhort, the whole man is renewed throughout; he glorioufly commences a *new creature in* CHRIST JESUS; ‡ for he is *changed from darkneſs to light, and from the power of* Satan *unto* GOD. § And this he receives, as a heavenly earneſt of the full fruition of that eternal bleſſedneſs, which grace will accompliſh in that glory, which ſhall be revealed. — Happy are the people, that are in ſuch a ſtate as this! Yea, bleſſed are the people, that have the LORD JESUS for their GOD!

SUCH is the ſalvation, that my whole ſoul prays you may receive. No labours of mine, ſuch as they are, will ever be thought too much, for the accompliſhment of theſe glorious purpoſes.

* *Ezek.* xxxvi. 26. † *Matt.* v. 6. ‡ 2 *Cor.* v. 17. § *Acts* xxvi. 18.

purpoſes. Suffer me, therefore, to conclude, by beſeeching you by all that is dear and tender, to lay theſe things moſt cloſely to heart. While I thus addreſs you, I feel the moſt affectionate ſympathy towards you, that words can poſſibly expreſs. I pray you, therefore, to go home, and lay this my firſt meſſage to heart. The expanded arms of a dear Redeemer are now open, to embrace every returning prodigal, that is enabled to receive this goſpel call. None are too vile for mercy to receive. The LORD of love has given you the promiſe; *Whoſoever cometh to me I will in no wiſe caſt out.* * Even ſo, LORD JESUS. Amen and amen.

* *John* vi. 37.

FINIS.